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LETTER DATED 15 SEPTEMBER 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999, I have the honour to convey the attached report on the international security presence in Kosovo covering the period from 1 to 29 August 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the report to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

99-26584 (E) 150999

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Annex

Monthly report to the United Nations on KFOR operations

1. Over the reporting period (1-29 August 1999), the number of KFOR troops deployed to the theatre increased, rising to a total of 48,030 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and non-NATO troops as of 29 August. Fourteen NATO member countries have now completed their deployments and the full deployment of NATO KFOR troops is expected to be completed by the end of September.

2. With respect to the deployment of partner and non-partner nations, Russian troops were almost fully deployed by the end of August, and were either operating in, or in the process of deploying to, their areas of responsibility within Multinational Brigades (MNBs) North, South and West. Russian deployment into the town of Orahovac was hampered by the ongoing demonstrations and roadblocks set up around the town by various groups of ethnic Albanians, and efforts continue to resolve the problem. As far as other non-NATO contributors are concerned, troops from the United Arab Emirates have now completed their deployment, as have the Finnish and Irish contingents. Argentinian troops began their initial deployment in late August.

Security

3. Over the reporting period, the situation in Kosovo remained tense. There was an increase in random acts of aggression and intimidation towards KFOR personnel, particularly at the beginning of August, which resulted in a number of minor injuries. Reprisal attacks by ethnic Albanians against ethnic minorities continued, especially against Serbs and their property, and against Orthodox churches, including the Cathedral in Pristina. Over the reporting period there were an estimated 152 civilian casualties in Kosovo. Seven persons were detained on suspicion of murder.

4. KFOR continues to work closely with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC), set up jointly by KFOR and the United Nations, maintains a mines database and transmits consolidated information to KFOR. KFOR troops continue to conduct rapid clearance of mission-essential mine and unexploded ordnance areas, including clearance of essential civilian infrastructure and public buildings. Other mines are marked and reported for action at a later time by civilian-contracted demining teams. Between 12 June (D-Day) and 28 August, 2,223 anti-personnel mines, 1,265 anti-tank mines, 2,207 bomblets and 28 improvised explosive devices were cleared. To date, the Serb Army (VJ) has provided 616 records of minefields to KFOR.

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

5. As of 20 August 1999, UCK was deemed to be in general compliance with the physical demilitarization provisions of the undertaking. As reported last month, the UCK's statement of total weapons held, which was handed to KFOR on K+30 (21 July), was assessed as falling short of their actual overall holdings.

This stated total was reconfirmed by UCK at K+60 (20 August). However, over the reporting period, KFOR troops collected and removed to secure storage sites a significantly larger amount of prohibited weapons (essentially support weapons, grenades, mines, explosives and ammunition) than those included in the UCK statement. By K+60, 67 per cent of UCK rifle holdings had been turned in and stored in secure weapons storage sites. UCK demilitarization, as measured by the handing in of declared weapons, is therefore deemed to be on track. However, some UCK elements at the operational zone and lower levels have continued to seek to exert authority and power over the Albanian population, despite public assertions from the UCK "Chief of the General Staff" that the UCK intended to work with both the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR, and did not intend to create alternative police structures.

6. Over the reporting period, Serb security forces continued to comply with the terms of the Military Technical Agreement (MTA). Following a Joint Implementation Commission meeting with Serb military representatives, which took place on 26 August, maps marking the internal border between Serbia and Kosovo were exchanged and signed by the Serbs and KFOR. Two minor non-compliance issues concerning the air security zone were discussed at that time with Serb Army (VJ) representatives, who gave assurances that they would take steps to ensure no further such occurrences. On 24 August, KFOR returned several items of equipment belonging to VJ, transporting them to the boundary between Serbia and Montenegro. Assurances were received from the Serbs at the Joint Implementation Commission meeting that this equipment had been removed from the Ground Security Zone. Over the reporting period, an increase in VJ air training activity and low-level training activity was noted in Serbia and Montenegro.

Cooperation with international organizations

7. KFOR continues to provide humanitarian assistance to international organizations throughout Kosovo on a daily basis and, upon request, focusing on transportation, the distribution of food, medical support, the reestablishment of support services and the protection and escorting of refugees and internally displaced persons. Civil administration in the public security area is still mainly a KFOR responsibility.

8. Support to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the demining, repair and cleaning of schools began in August, and will continue through September. KFOR has also continued to support the emergency shelter programme established by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

9. KFOR provides security for the four customs posts in Kosovo opened by UNMIK, two on the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,[1] one on the border with Albania and one at Pristina airport. In addition, KFOR Multinational Brigades have established five border-crossing points to assess the type and frequency of traffic and to conduct random searches of vehicles including to prevent the illegal traffic of weapons and military equipment.

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[1] Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

10. KFOR continues to support UNMIK at all levels of the civil administration in Kosovo. KFOR is represented at the Kosovo Transitional Council (KTC), which met twice during August, and the joint civil commissions. KFOR also works closely with UNMIK-appointed civil administrators at the district level and in a few municipalities.

11. With respect to infrastructure, KFOR troops are currently still involved in such tasks as sanitation, securing water supplies, bridge and power plant operations and manning fire engines. Kosovo's road systems have almost returned to pre-conflict conditions. KFOR troops are operating and maintaining rail transportation.

Outlook

12. The security situation in Kosovo continues to improve slowly, despite the increase in violence against KFOR at the beginning of the reporting period, which has since declined. Unfortunately, inter-ethnic violence, committed principally by Kosovar Albanians, continues to be a major security concern, and KFOR will continue to work in close cooperation with UNMIK to address these and other issues in order to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo.

13. A major security challenge in the immediate future will be the completion of the UCK's transformation and demilitarization and ensuring that they meet their obligations for the K+90 (19 September) milestone. Substantial progress in this area will be necessary to provide greater stability throughout Kosovo and to enhance UNMIK's authority in the region.